



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
St. Louis District®

Press Release

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Auxiliary Lock Chamber at Melvin Price Locks and Dam is Closed After Miter Gate Failure

Alton, Ill. – The 600-foot auxiliary lock chamber at the Melvin Price Locks and Dam, near Alton, has been closed after failure of the lower gates Sunday morning. The Locks and Dam are operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District.

The incident occurred at about 7 a.m. while the chamber was being prepared to lock several pleasure craft southbound. There were no vessels in the chamber at the time of the failure.

The main 1200-foot chamber at the locks was not affected in the incident and remains in full operation. It is continuing to lock barge tows up to the maximum 15-barge size.

Initial inspections show that there is substantial damage to the two gates, known as miter gates, at the south end of the chamber. The gates are designed to swing like doors from either side of the lock chamber. When shut, they make contact at an angle – known as the miter – to ensure a proper seal and mechanical strength. However, for reasons still unknown, they swung past that point, damaging both the metal structural members and concrete in which they are anchored.

While first estimates are that repairs will be extensive and require several months to complete, St. Louis District engineers are refusing to speculate either on the extent or cause of damage. Both gates will have to be lifted out of the water for repair and to further assess damage. Once they are removed it will be possible to develop a plan for their repair as well as the rest of the machinery and structure.

Unlike the Chain of Rocks locks, which had to be repaired recently, the two chambers at Melvin Price are separated by several hundred feet, and repairs to the shorter auxiliary chamber will not interfere with fulltime operation of the main chamber.

The Melvin Price Locks and Dam were placed in operation October 10, 1989 and replace the old locks 26 which were located about two miles north adjacent to Alton, IL.